
January 2003 - Injury Prevention Newsletter

Alaska News and Resources

1. Guide to the Alaska State Legislative session
2. Poison Control report
3. Brady Campaign gives Alaska D- on laws protecting children from guns

National News and Resources

4. National Burn Awareness Week: Feb 2-8
5. National Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week: Feb. 9-15
6. Cell Phones: Hands-Free not Risk-Free
7. SUVs Most Popular, Most Reviled Vehicle?

Miscellaneous

8. Product recalls and safety information

1. **Guide to the Alaska State Legislative session:** As a new administration and legislature began this month we in the injury prevention field have an opportunity to education our new leaders about laws and regulations that can improve the safety of Alaskans. To track bill or resolution status during the session you can log on to www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/start.asp and follow the progress of the legislation. It is best to know the bill or resolution number, however there are search engines which will allow you to look for topics such as: public safety, safety, motor vehicles, weapons, or alcohol. Prefiled bills of interest may be:

HB1 and SB46 relating to stalking and protective orders
HB18 and SB2 relating to parental liability for child's damage
HB27 which increases DWI penalties
HB44 which would required the use of headlights
HB65 related to importing alcohol to dry villages
SB16 Ninilchik pedestrian access

If you would like to give testimony or provide a "public opinion message" contact your local legislative information office at:

www.legis.state.ak.us/infodocs/howlio.pdf or download a POM form at www.legis.state.ak.us/infodocs/pomform.pdf

2. **Alaska Poison Report:** The Alaska Poison Control 2002 Annual Report is available through the State of Alaska Injury Surveillance and Prevention Program. The report outlines by region the types of calls and the substances involved. Children 5 years and under accounted for the majority of the exposures reported and 66% of these calls were able to be treated without going to a healthcare facility. While most of the calls were for human exposure (70%), 27% of the calls were from information, especially drug identification which should be handled by local pharmacies and not the Poison Control System. A copy of this report can be found at www.chems.gov/ems_poison_control.htm Do you remember the Poison Control phone number? **1-800-222-1222**
3. **Brady Campaign gives Alaska D- on laws protecting children from guns:** In its sixth annual analysis of state laws protecting children from gun violence, the Brady campaign to Prevent Gun Violence united with the Million Mom March

gave Alaska a D-. The low grade was because Alaska does not require child-safety locks to be sold with guns, does not hold adult responsible for leaving loaded guns around children and does not have any safety standards for handguns. According to the report in 2000, the most recent year for which data is available, 25 children and teenagers in Alaska died from gunfire, resulting in a youth firearm death rate nearly three times the national average. So see the this report and to compare prior years and other states go to www.bradycampaign.org/press/rc03

4. **National Burn Awareness Week Feb 2-8:** During Burn Awareness Week 2003 the Shriners - members of the fraternal organization that operates 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children throughout North America - want people to take the necessary steps to prevent burns in the home. "Most burn injuries are preventable," said Charles A. Claypool, president and CEO of the Shrine of North America. "Our goal with this burn awareness campaign is to help parents keep their children safe." Shriners Hospitals are known as the experts in pediatric burn care. To coincide with Burn Awareness Week the CDC released a news release stating that cigarettes are the leading cause of fire deaths and that children account for more than 35% of all fire and burn injuries and deaths. In fact, 5,000 children are injured from contact with lit cigarettes and lighters according to the CDC news release. Fires and burns are the second leading cause of accidental death for children under age 4. "A child who sustains a burn injury can suffer lifelong physical and psychological trauma", says Dr. Martin Eichelberger, president of the SAFE KIDS Campaign, "Following simple precautions in the home can prevent this kind of unnecessary trauma. It is an injury no parent wants to see their child suffer through." To order a copy of "Burn Prevention Tips" you can visit the Shriner's Web site at www.shrinershq.org
5. **National Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week: Feb 9-15:** SAFE KIDS Coalitions across the nation will be focusing on transportation in childcare settings. This is a collaborative effort of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign. The "Moving Kids Safely in Child Care" curriculum is available for CPS instructors to provide assistance and training to childcare providers. For more information about child passenger safety or the "Moving Kids Safely in Child Care" curriculum you can access the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at www.nhtsa.dot.gov
6. **Cell Phones: Hands-Free not Risk-Free:** University of Utah researchers reported that when you are talking on a hands-free cell phone while driving, your eyes may be focused on what's ahead but your mind is often elsewhere. "You find this inattention blindness, which shows that even though your eyes may be looking directly at something, you may fail to see it or not see it in time," says David Strayer, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Utah. "Just because your eyes are looking at something outside the window of the car, it doesn't mean your brain is going to process it," he added. This study builds on the researchers' work in 2001, when they concluded that the use of hand-free and hand-held cell phones impair driving ability equally. In the new study, Strayer and his fellow researchers found talking on a hands-free cell phone reduced the

amount of visual information drivers processed by about 50%. Rae Tyson, a spokesman for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says the study reaffirms the dangers of driving while talking on a cell phone. "It's always been a safety concern for us for the very reasons spelled out in that study," said Tyson. "The fact is that hand-free is not necessarily risk-free." Currently New York state has banned hand-held cell phone use while driving and New Jersey forbids those under 21 with learner's permits to use any cell phones while driving. More new laws seem likely. This year, 21 states are considering legislations governing cell phone use while driving. For more information on driving while talking a cell phones visit the National Safety Council at www.nsc.org or the AAA at www.aaawa.com for cell phone safety tips.

7. **SUVs Most Popular, Most Reviled Vehicles?:** Although deaths due to care crashes have remained stable in the last decade, light trucks - pickup trucks, vans and SUVs in particular - are an increasing component of all fatal rollover crashes, according to Lee Morris of the Medical College of Georgia. According to recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 2000 report, rollover crashes of cars and light trucks killed 9,873 people that year, or nearly one third of all people who died in passenger vehicles that year. During that same year, 6% of SUVs involved in crashes rolled over, compared to 4% of pickup trucks and 2% of vans. And in fatal crashes, 36% of SUVs rolled over, as did 24% of pickup trucks and 19% of vans. This report is available at www.nrd.nhtsa.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/Rpts/2002/809-438.pdf But NHTSA is not the only organization looking at the safety of light trucks. Senator John McCain is asking if new regulations are needed to reduce SUV-related accidents and many organizations are attacking the SUV as gas-guzzlers which indirectly assist terrorists. Without such concerted consumer safety education, the overwhelming popularity of SUVs and other light trucks may cause the United States to find itself in a "rollover epidemic", says Dr. Federico Vaca of the University of Irvine in a recent editorial. "This stresses the urgency for further consumer education by vehicle manufacturers, safety promotion program implementation and greater advocacy on the part of emergency physicians," he added.
8. **Product recalls and safety information:** The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission tracks injuries or deaths in over 15,000 consumer products. To report a dangerous product or a product-related injury, call CPSC's hotline at 800-638-2772 or CPSC's teletypewriter at 800-638-8270. Other information and product recalls are available on their website: www.cpsc.gov.

This message has been compiled by the Section of Community Health and EMS (CHEMS), Alaska Division of Public Health and sent to subscribers of the AK-Prev and AHELP list-serves. It has also been sent as a "bcc" to others in Alaska including Public Health Centers, SAFE KIDS coalitions, Native Health Organizations, and regional EMS Councils and Coordinators who may be interested and active in injury prevention and health promotion. The purpose is to share resources, breaking news, training opportunities, product recalls, and opinions to help prevent injuries to Alaskans. Feedback and contributions are encouraged. Contributions can be directed to Karen Lawfer: karen_lawfer@health.state.ak.us

Link for the AK-Prev and AK-EMSC list serve: http://chems.alaska.gov/ems_list_servers.htm

Link for AHELP list serve: <http://www.auroraweb.com/ahec>